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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 006638

SIPDIS

NOFORN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/08/2014

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PTER](#) [JO](#) [IO](#)

SUBJECT: JORDANIAN HOSTAGE IN IRAQ RELEASED AFTER FAMILY  
PAYS RANSOM

REF: A. AMMAN 6574

[B](#). AMMAN 6507

[C](#). AMMAN 6456

[D](#). AMMAN 6370

Classified By: CDA David Hale for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: A Jordanian businessman abducted in Iraq has returned to Jordan after his family paid a \$100,000 ransom. The GOJ confirms it is still working "behind the scenes" -- in part through the mediation of an Iraqi tribal leader -- to secure the release of two others kidnapped on July 26. At the same time, an MFA official insists that the government did not make concessions to win the release of four hostages kidnapped in Fallujah. However, the GOJ's handling of this crisis -- including its lack of a strong public stand against the kidnappers from the beginning -- bodes ill for the safety of Jordanians traveling to and working in Iraq. End Summary.

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JORDANIAN RELEASED AFTER FAMILY PAYS \$100,000  
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[1](#)2. (C) A Jordanian businessman kidnapped in Iraq returned to Jordan on August 5 after his father and cousin claimed to have traveled to Baghdad and paid a \$100,000 ransom. The family of Adel Ubeidallah told reporters he was kidnapped on July 28 when gunmen stormed his apartment in Baghdad's al-Ameriya district, killing one of his Iraqi partners in the process. Ali al-Ayed, director of Foreign Minister Muasher's private office and MFA point person on the hostage crisis, said on August 8 that the GOJ was not involved in his release, and blamed a "gang" for his kidnapping. While expressing skepticism about some of the reported details of the story, al-Ayed added that there is no indication that the group had a political motivation, and the fact that they demanded ransom suggested that the incident was purely criminal in nature.

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TWO OTHERS STILL MISSING, BUT GOJ WORKING FOR THEIR RELEASE  
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[1](#)3. (C) Al-Ayed confirmed that two Jordanians kidnapped on July 26 have not been released and are still believed to be held in the al-Qaim area (refs). Without going into details, he said that the GOJ is working "through various channels" to win their release. (Prime Minister Faisal al-Fayez told a local paper on August 7 that the GOJ is in "intensive" contact with an Iraqi tribal leader to secure their release.) Al-Ayed acknowledged that someone claiming to have custody of the two demanded a ransom of \$25,000 but who it was, and whether that demand still holds, remains unclear. He said that the Iraqi government, preoccupied with other concerns, has not been able to help with their release.

[1](#)4. (C) Al-Ayed said the government's first priority is to protect the lives of its citizens, and they preferred to work out of the public eye to this end. However, some relatives of the hostages have complicated the GOJ's efforts by negotiating directly with purported kidnappers, and in turn sharing the resulting information (and in some cases misinformation) with the press. Al-Ayed acknowledged that the GOJ has been under significant pressure for its perceived "inaction" on behalf of the hostages.

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NO CONCESSIONS MADE FOR FOUR OTHERS  
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[1](#)5. (S/NF) Al-Ayed insists that the GOJ made no concessions on behalf of four Jordanian hostages released last week after the intervention of Iraqi tribal and religious leaders in Fallujah (ref A). He said the Iraqi leaders called the Jordanian Embassy in Baghdad to take custody of the hostages once they were located and freed in Fallujah. However, Jordanian intelligence officials advised their Charge not to do so, fearing that the Jordanian diplomats would walk into a trap and be kidnapped themselves or killed. Instead, the men were transported to the Jordanian field hospital in Fallujah, and then taken to the Jordanian Embassy in Baghdad where they spent the night before returning to Jordan. Asked if they

were able to ascertain the identity of the kidnappers, al-Ayed scoffed: "they all know each other," suggesting that the tribal leaders arranged for them to "escape" once the "raid" commenced.

16. (C) Acknowledging that the GOJ's failure to make a strong, initial public statement against negotiating with kidnappers may have encouraged more hostage-taking, al-Ayed emphasized it was the company's decision to give into the kidnappers' demands. He added that until the security situation improves -- including on the roads into Iraq -- the GOJ is bracing itself for more kidnappings. However, he pointed out that the truckers' security concerns are keeping some of them home. One of the recently released hostages told a local newspaper that competitive Iraqi truckers are inciting would-be kidnappers against Jordanian truck drivers, spreading rumors that they work for U.S. forces. Another former hostage said his impression was that his captors were criminals out for money, rather than terrorists with a political motivation.

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COMMENT  
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17. (S/NF) Although the GOJ insists that it will not make concessions to kidnappers, it is unwilling to intercede when others do so. However hesitant to confront the kidnappers publicly, al-Ayed clearly implied that Jordanian security officials are working their Iraqi tribal contacts to secure the remaining hostages' release.

18. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.

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HALE